

# Council Approves 250-Acre Park Plan for Arroyo Seco

PASADENA

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The City Council gave the go-ahead Tuesday to turn a 250-acre stretch of the Arroyo Seco into the Hahamongna Watershed Park.

In doing so, the council largely endorsed the ideas of the project's six-member planning authority, which favors restoration of the area's natural habitat rather than building playing fields.

The council also supported the controversial renaming of the project. The area, which is centered on a broad, rocky piece of riverbed east of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, had been named Devil's Gate Park.

Hahamongna, which means "fruitful valley, flowing waters," was the name given to the area by its first human inhabitants, the Gabrieleno Indians. Some members of the Joint Powers Planning Authority, which is developing the plan, objected to changing the name from Devil's Gate.

Now, the dam at the park's southern end will continue to be named Devil's Gate  
**Please see PARK, J6**

## PARK: Arroyo Seco Project OK'd

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Dam, but the park will be called Hahamongna.

The council also voted to allow JPL to keep a parking lot on the eastern edge of the project, at least for now. The parking lot, which is expected to provide the city with \$3.8 million in revenue between now and the year 2000, is the prime source of funding for Hahamongna.

But the most emotional issue confronted by the council appeared to pit environmentalists against a children's sports program. The question was whether to include playing fields that would accommodate the growing ranks of the Pasadena-Altadena American Youth Soccer Organization, which runs a league program for 2,500 youngsters.

"I don't care whether you put soccer fields in Hahamongna or not," said Patrick Green, one of the administrators of the soccer league. "But I do tell you that we need them."

Green said that the league, which has been growing rapidly in recent years, was constantly vying with other athletic activities for space at local school playing fields.

"Last Saturday, I got a call [from a soccer coach], saying, 'Hey, Pat, there's a baseball game scheduled at the same time we've got 250 kids coming in. Find us some fields,'" Green said.

But other speakers were adamant about making the Arroyo Seco a natural habitat. "I think soccer's a great game, but that's all it is," said Erin Rothenberg, a student at Westridge School for Girls in Pasadena, who has been involved in AYSO activities for eight years. "Animals could die [without a habitat]. If playing fields aren't built, soccer won't disappear from the face of the earth."

Rick Fisher, representing the local chapter of the California Plant Society, said Hahamongna could be a major contribution to natural sciences. "It doesn't look like much now but it has the potential to be Pasadena's version of Yosemite," he said.

Though the council did not close the door on the idea of building playing fields on the site, it agreed with the Joint Planning Powers Authority that every effort should be made to find playing fields at other locations.

The planning authority had reportedly been divided on the issue,

until it agreed to a compromise making the Arroyo Seco a last resort as a site for playing fields and calling for a search for new sites elsewhere. At Tuesday's council meeting, Gabrieleno leader Yera Rocha, a member of the planning authority, suggested the depth of emotion attached to the issue.

"I never voted for soccer fields," she told the council. "If you want war, then you'll have war."

The council directed Robert Baderian, acting recreation director, to meet with officials from the Pasadena Unified School District to identify within the next two months potential new sites on

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Area where Hahamongna Watershed Park is planned was full of dumped debris in April, 1991. Jet Propulsion Library is in background.

school property.

The council is the senior partner in a three-party alliance to fashion a new park, including flood control and water storage facilities. The others are the La Canada Flint-ridge City Council and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy. Pasadena has appointed four members to the planning authority, and the other two have appointed one member each.

Theoretically, all have a say in decisions made about the area. Tuesday's vote was technically the council's "comment" on the planning authority's concept. But Pasadena owns the land and has so far provided most of the project's funding, giving it precedence, said Ernest L. Messner, chairman of the planning authority.

"We [the authority] are empowered to adopt a park plan," Messner said on Wednesday. "But the reality is: who's got the bucks?"

Pasadena has not only chipped in about \$1 million in planning expenses, but it has also committed revenues from the JPL parking lot. The city-owned Water and Power Department is expected to be a major contributor to the project.

Another \$1.8 million in county funds for parks and recreation, authorized under Proposition A, which voters approved in November, will also be funneled through the city.

The council differed with the planning authority only in keeping the JPL parking lot within the project. The planning authority had wanted to phase the lot out in three years, but the council voted to eliminate it only when it would be financially feasible to do so.

Both also agreed that Johnson Field, a small baseball field built by city employees for a municipal soccer league, should also be eliminated.